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U.S. SENATOR

RHODE ISLAND

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SENATOR CHAFEE'S REACTION TO THE STATE OF THE UNION SPEECH

WASHINGTON, D.C. – “In his State of the Union speech last night the President put forward a number of issues and ideas that all Americans can and do support. By urging all of us to put aside our partisan differences, the President called on all public officials to put the good of the country before politics, and to work together to achieve great things for the American people. Since I entered the Senate, the people of Rhode Island know that I have worked tirelessly, whether it was as a member of the Centrist Coalition and the so-called “Gang of 14” or as the author of the landmark Brownfields legislation, to build consensus.

Additionally, I was pleased to hear the president address the issue of America’s addiction to oil, and to hear him advance several options to improve energy efficiency. While this is an important step, the responsibility remains on Congress to act. I have joined with 11 other senators to introduce a bipartisan measure to reduce oil consumption by 2.5 million barrels per day within a decade, and by 2031 reduce oil consumption in the United States by half. Our bill would also set targets for so-called flex-fuel vehicles, which run on clean, domestically produced ethanol. We introduced this bill on November 18, 2005.

In the past, Congress has been reluctant to take positive steps toward reducing our dependence on foreign oil. On six different occasions, I have voted to boost CAFE standards, which would require an increase in the fuel efficiency of American-made cars and light trucks. The most recent measure was rejected by a vote of 28-67. I call on Congress to become proactive in the fight to end our dependence on foreign oil.

The president’s commitment to improving education, especially in the areas of math and science, is important to ensure our children are the best educated in the world. Also, his commitment to providing funding to test and provide medical treatment for all those infected with HIV/AIDS will be critical to mitigating the complications of this tragic disease and reducing the number of those infected nationwide.

Furthermore, as the president addressed the rebuilding effort in New Orleans, his commitment to 'address the deeper challenges that existed before the storm arrived' is vitally important.

I was also happy to hear the President take a stand on reforms to the Congressional spending process as well as to strengthen ethical standards in Washington. Such steps are imperative in order for Congress to carry out the duty of serving our constituencies while upholding the public trust.

I look forward to working with the administration and my colleagues in the Senate to advance these worthy goals in the coming year. If we work together, we can do good for the American people and move the country forward.”

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